

## *BostonVoyager*



Today we'd like to introduce you to Woomin Kim.

**Woomin, please kick things off for us by telling us about yourself and your journey so far.** Growing up, I was the "messy" one in the house who was always curious about things, brought trash home, made dresses dirty, wrote nonsense fiction and broke stuff. I was shy with people but active with materials. When my parents bought my sister and me a desk for the first time, my older sister organized her books and supplies and I brought my carving knives and carved all over the desk and covered it with drawings. I was lucky that my mom saw it as creativity and encouraged my experimental spirit all the time. My mother studied painting herself in college but she didn't have an opportunity to pursue her dream as an artist. Instead, she fully supported my peculiarity and interest in making, and recommended me to study art in more focused environment. Thanks to my mother's support, I began at Seoul Art High School and focused on sculpture throughout school until I graduated MFA in School of the Art Institute of Chicago. I always loved building things in 3-d and engaging with materials directly. For me, Sculpture meant total freedom that I could make anything in any form using any kind of media.

Coming to US and living as an immigrant gave me a whole new perspective of materials. Being seen as a foreign material myself in this country made me think about movements of people and materials in this global world (where things are from, how and why they are here) and politics and the power dynamics that are underlying in their movement. Learning about invisible stories that are hidden in every corner of the world, I appreciate that I am an artist and feel extremely grateful for everyone who supported me. Being an artist makes me stay curious, sensitive and humble.

**Can you give our readers some background on your art?**

I make sculptures and installation using various media including found or everyday objects, fabric, glass, animal fur, collected dust, etc. Every material is active and has rich character. For me, observing their surfaces, listen to what they offer, imagining their stories are a beginning point of making art. Through making sculptures, I try to reveal the gap between how I perceive objects linguistically or conceptually and what they really are, between my

Clark, Edward. "Art & Life with Woomin Kim", *Boston Voyager*, 18 June 2018.

subjective understanding and the truth of the material. For example, in the works "Unknown Species", I revealed my superficial connection to Animal. Animals are everywhere from a zoo to a dog park and hundreds of Disney movies, but all of them are somehow romanticized or modified into human versions and what they really are is unknown and hidden. I collected used animal fur coats (mink, fox, raccoon, rabbit, etc.) from various sources and shaved all of them. The harvested fur was woven into a large textile. This was a way to reveal how animals exist in my urban condition: homogenized, flattened, and abstracted.

In my current project, I am making fake minerals by using daily objects and different materials. The project is inspired by the mineral collection at the Harvard National History Museum. I was fascinated to learn how those foreign looking materials are actually the same components of the objects I am using everyday such as jewelries, phone batteries, painting pigments, face cream or cement. At the same time, it was frightening to encounter the big gap, between the rawness of the material and neatly finished products that I have been totally blind to. By breaking/melting/assembling familiar objects and build fake minerals, I think about rich and powerful origin of materials, before they were extracted and framed into human, functional or capitalist value.

**How do you think about success, as an artist, and what do quality do you feel is most helpful?**

I am careful to give any advice to other people since every artist has their own personality and lifestyle. So just to share what I tell myself once in a while: be patient and grateful. Every step of my art practice from researching to making art, documenting, finding exhibition opportunities, getting feedbacks is time consuming and takes a lot of care. I often feel anxious in the process since the world seems to be moving so fast these days spewing out new arts and artists every day. It is very easy to lose patience every moment trying to make things happen faster and make myself more visible. Whenever I find myself rushing, I try to remember that the most important thing is making art that I can like and it is possible only when I follow my own tempo. I make art not to prove anything or satisfy other people, but because I believe in freedom of art. So, I tell myself: Be patient, make every studio time rich and full, be grateful to friends and family who support my art and decisions.

**What's the best way for someone to check out your work and provide support?**

One of my works "Urban Nest" won Second Prize for the Cambridge Art Association National Prize Show and is on display at University Place Gallery through June 24th. This summer, I will be making art in Gallery 263 in Cambridge as part of their artist residency program. The four artists in residence will have a group show in early August. This fall I will participate in another artist residency program at Boston Center for the Arts. In that program, I will run a couple of public programs that people could bring their used sweaters and objects and weave them all together into one big fabric. Also, I will be a new member of Boston Sculptors Gallery and will have a solo show at the gallery early next year. I am a part time educator at Museum of Fine Art, Boston and help families make art and have fun during the art classes and museum events. You could always see my art works online: [www.woominkim.com](http://www.woominkim.com)